CHAPTER 7

Implementation

Implementation Policies

Translate the Vision into Actionable Steps

Harlingen will implement the Plan through clearly defined projects, programs and partnerships that reflect community priorities. These include zoning updates, infrastructure improvements, housing initiatives and mobility enhancements that bring the vision to life.

Build a System for Measuring Progress

The City will establish performance indicators and reporting tools to track progress toward key goals. Annual updates and five-year plan reviews will ensure transparency, accountability and adaptability.

Commit to Equitable and Lasting Change

Implementation efforts will prioritize long-term outcomes that serve all residents, particularly those in underserved neighborhoods. The Plan will be used to address historic gaps in infrastructure, housing and services.

Integrate the Plan into Daily Operations

Harlingen will embed the Comprehensive Plan into development review, budgeting, capital planning and staff training. A designated implementation lead or team will help coordinate actions across departments.

Maintaining a Comprehensive Plan

Harlingen's Comprehensive Plan is designed to be a living document responsive to the community's evolving needs, economic shifts, growth patterns and public input. The Plan reflects a shared vision shaped by residents and stakeholders, and its success depends on regular maintenance, implementation and evaluation.

To remain relevant, the Plan must be used in daily decisions and periodically revisited to respond to new challenges and opportunities. This Section outlines how the City will maintain the Plan and ensure its effective use over time.

Annual Progress Reporting

Each year, City staff coordinated by the Planning & Development Department should prepare a brief Implementation Progress Report. This report will evaluate actions completed, progress made on key goals and highlight any areas requiring additional attention. The report should be shared with City Commission and the public to maintain transparency and support accountability.

Five-Year Plan Review

At least every five years, the City of Harlingen will conduct a formal review of the Comprehensive Plan. This process should include:

- Feedback from City departments, boards and commissions.
- Input from the public and community partners.
- Evaluation of performance metrics established in the Implementation Matrix.

The goal is to determine whether updates are needed and which recommendations should be re-prioritized. A full rewrite may be considered every 15–20 years, depending on the pace of change in the community.

Proactive and Responsive Implementation

Implementation tools fall into two categories: proactive and responsive. Together, these approaches ensure that the Plan remains a relevant and useful guide for future growth.

Proactive Tools

Zoning and Land Use Updates

The Future Land Use Plan establishes the foundation for future zoning decisions. Zoning code updates should reflect the Plan's goals by supporting mixed-use development, diverse housing types, infill opportunities and walkable neighborhoods.

Capital Improvement Programming

Public investments, particularly in drainage, streets and public facilities, should align with the Plan's land use priorities and equity goals. Infrastructure should be prioritized in areas of need such as West Harlingen.

Incentive Programs

Tools such as density bonuses, tax abatements and public-private partnerships can help implement targeted goals, especially for affordable housing, downtown redevelopment and green infrastructure projects.

Regional Partnerships

Harlingen should continue to coordinate with Valley Metro, TxDOT, Cameron County and the Port of Harlingen to align infrastructure, transportation and economic development goals.

Responsive Tools

Development Review Process

The City will continue to apply the Comprehensive Plan during zoning and plat review processes, using the Plan to guide decisions on compatibility, intensity and infrastructure needs.

Amendment Procedures

As priorities evolve or unexpected conditions arise, the Plan should be amended to reflect new community input. Any amendments should follow a clear process that includes public notice, staff analysis and the recommendation of the Planning and Zoning Commission.

Community Engagement

Engagement is not a one time event. Continued outreach, including bilingual engagement, pop ups and digital platforms, will allow the Plan to remain grounded in community voices. Feedback loops should be used to adjust strategies over time.

Education and Training

Ongoing education for City staff, boards and elected officials is essential to ensure the successful implementation of the Comprehensive Plan. Staff members, the Planning and Zoning Commission and the City Commission should participate in regular training workshops. These workshops should clarify each group's role in supporting the Plan's implementation and ensure consistent interpretation and application of its goals.

Training sessions may include a focused review of responsibilities, a walkthrough of the Plan's chapters with an emphasis on relevant actions and hands-on exercises such as mock meetings or scenario discussions. Workshops should also include time for questions and interactive dialogue to ensure alignment and build internal ownership of the Plan. These trainings will help create a shared understanding and keep Harlingen's team coordinated and confident in applying the Plan's recommendations.

Organization of Recommendations

Each recommendation in the Comprehensive Plan is directly tied to Harlingen's vision and guiding principles. The structure of the Plan follows a clear and logical progression from community values to goals to targeted actions. This ensures that every recommendation can be traced back to the broader priorities of the City and the input gathered from the community.

Recommendations are grouped by topical chapter, such as land use, transportation and housing. Within each chapter, the recommendations align with the specific goals established for that theme. These goals were informed by community feedback and reflect the most pressing opportunities and needs identified throughout the planning process. The structure ensures that plan users can understand the "why" behind each recommendation and how it fits within the City's long-term vision.



Implementation Matrix

The following pages present a matrix of action items designed to move Harlingen toward achieving the vision and goals of this Comprehensive Plan.

The matrix includes the following elements:



Action No.: Provides an identification number for each action.



Action Description: Summarizes the recommended project, program or initiative that will help achieve the City's priorities.

Responsible Entity: Identifies the primary department, organization or partner responsible for leading implementation. Many actions will require coordination across departments or partnerships with outside agencies, but each action should have a clear lead entity to ensure accountability. Responsible parties may change over time if another organization is better suited to carry the action forward.



Metrics & Targets: Defines how progress will be measured. These indicators will help the City track the success of the Plan's implementation, such as project completions, participation numbers or policy adoptions. Tracking results will help determine whether Harlingen is moving toward its goals, and can reveal when strategies need to be adjusted. Metrics can be updated if better performance indicators are identified.



Timing: Sets an estimated timeline for initiating or completing each action:

Short: Within 3 years

Medium: 3–6 years

Long: 7–10+ years

Ongoing: Continuous or recurring effort

#	Action Description	Responsible Entity	Metrics & Targets	Timing
Land Use				
LU-1	Update the zoning ordinance to reflect the Future Land Use Map and new district types.	Planning Department	New zoning code adopted and used in development review	Short-Term
LU-2	Identify and map key redevelopment sites citywide (such as underutilized commercial parcels along major corridors, vacant properties in and around Downtown, underused sites in the Medical District, and aging retail centers with large parking lots suitable for infill)	Planning, GIS, MIS	Redevelopment opportunity map completed and shared	Short-Term
LU-3	Develop infill and redevelopment design guidelines to ensure contextual fit.	Planning	Guidelines adopted and applied in project reviews	Short-Term
LU-4	Encourage mixed-use and infill development along corridors and Downtown Harlingen.	Planning, Developers	Number of infill/mixed-use permits issued	Medium-Term
LU-5	Conduct a small area plan for the Medical District.	Planning, Local Health Systems	Plan adopted and applied in zoning reviews	Medium-Term
LU-6	Establish overlay zones along key corridors to support walkable, human-scaled development (for example, Jackson Street, Harrison Avenue, Commerce Street, US 77 frontage roads)	Planning Department	Overlay zoning districts adopted and applied	Medium-Term
LU-7	Integrate hazard mitigation and green infrastructure into land use policy.	Planning, Engineering	New policies included in zoning and subdivision code	Medium-Term
LU-8	Update neighborhood zoning to support reinvestment and compatible infill.	Planning Department	Zoning updates adopted in 2 or more neighborhoods	Medium-Term
LU-9	Prepare planning studies for key opportunity sites identified in the FLUM.	Planning, Consultants	Studies completed and linked to implementation actions	Medium-Term

#	Action Description	Responsible Entity	Metrics & Targets	Timing
LU-10	Align land use and transportation priorities to support future transit investment, focusing on corridors identified in coordination with the MPO and Valley Metro long-range transit planning.	Planning, MPO	Number of corridors identified for future transit-supportive development	Medium-Term
Housing				
HO-1	Promote missing middle housing types such as duplexes, townhomes and fourplexes through zoning updates.	Planning Department	Number of missing middle units permitted	Short-Term
HO-2	Expand homeownership through first-time buyer programs and down payment assistance.	Community Development Department	Number of households assisted annually	Short-Term
HO-3	Allow accessory dwelling units (ADUs) in single-family districts.	Planning Department	ADU ordinance adopted and used in permits	Short-Term
HO-4	Identify City-owned parcels suitable for housing development.	Community, Development Special Projects, City Manager's Office	Number of city parcels prepared or disposed for housing	Short-Term
HO-5	Develop a housing toolkit that outlines incentives for workforce and senior housing.	Planning, EDC, Community Development Department	Toolkit completed and distributed	Medium-Term
HO-6	Encourage infill housing in priority neighborhoods with infrastructure access.	Planning, Developers	Infill housing permits issued	Medium-Term
HO-7	Promote housing near employment centers and public transit.	Planning	Number of new units within half-mile of job/transit	Medium-Term
HO-8	Incorporate housing strategies into small area or corridor plans.	Planning Department	Number of plans including housing strategies	Medium-Term
HO-9	Support affordable housing programs through partnerships with housing authorities and nonprofits.	Housing Authority, Nonprofits	Number of new affordable units created	Ongoing
HO-10	Monitor housing affordability trends and update strategies every 5 years.	Planning, Housing Authority, Community Development Department	Affordability reports completed and shared	Ongoing
Economic Development				
ED-1	Establish a small business incentive fund and technical support program.	HEDC, Chamber of Commerce	Program launched; businesses supported	Short-Term
ED-2	Promote Harlingen as a regional logistics hub.	HEDC, Harlingen Port, Valley International Airport	Logistics marketing materials published	Short-Term
ED-3	Establish branding and marketing strategies to recruit businesses.	HEDC, CVB	Brand strategy adopted	Short-Term
ED-4	Conduct an economic opportunity audit to identify redevelopment areas.	HEDC, Planning	Audit completed and presented to Commission	Short-Term
ED-5	Prepare shovel-ready sites with zoning and utilities to attract industry.	HEDC, Utilities, Developers	Number of acres ready for development	Medium-Term
ED-6	Create a reuse and redevelopment plan for Valle Vista Mall.	City Manager, HEDC	Plan adopted; implementation initiated	Medium-Term
ED-7	Attract target industries by leveraging regional workforce and assets.	HEDC	Business attraction targets met	Medium-Term
ED-8	Create pathways for youth entrepreneurship and training.	EDC, ISD, TSTC	Number of students participating in programs	Medium-Term
ED-9	Support expansion of medical and educational employers in growth zones.	HEDC, Institutions	Number of new jobs in priority sectors	Long-Term
ED-10	Revitalize downtown storefronts through incentive grants and events.	Main Street, Downtown Partners, HEDC	Storefronts improved annually	Ongoing

#	Action Description	Responsible Entity	Metrics & Targets	Timing
Transportation & Mobility				
TM-1	Implement a Complete Streets policy to guide future capital projects.	Planning, Engineering	Policy adopted and referenced	Short-Term
TM-2	Install shaded bus stops and amenities at key locations.	Public Works, Valley Metro	Number of upgraded transit stops	Short-Term
TM-3	Enhance wayfinding signage for bicyclists and pedestrians.	Planning, Public Works, Engineering	Wayfinding system installed	Short-Term
TM-4	Prioritize safe routes to schools for active transportation improvements.	Engineering Public Works, HCISDs	Number of projects near schools completed	Short-Term
TM-5	Improve intersections with high crash rates using safety audits.	Engineering	Number of intersections redesigned	Medium-Term
TM-6	Coordinate with Valley Metro to increase frequency and coverage of transit.	Planning, Valley Metro	Transit ridership increases	Medium-Term
TM-7	Promote micro-mobility options in Downtown Harlingen and high-traffic areas.	Planning, Private Partners	Launch of shared mobility services	Medium-Term
TM-8	Evaluate transportation equity and gaps in low-income areas.	Planning, MPO	Equity analysis completed	Medium-Term
TM-9	Expand sidewalk and trail connections citywide.	Public Works, MPO	Miles of new sidewalk or trail constructed	Ongoing
TM-10	Pursue federal and state grants for multimodal improvements.	Public Works, City Manager	Special Projects	Ongoing
TM-11	Implement intersection improvements through a phased roundabout program at key corridors and gateways to improve safety, reduce congestion, and enhance downtown access.	Planning, Engineering, TxDOT, MPO	Number of roundabouts constructed; crash reductions	Medium-Term
TM-12	Expand the city's active transportation network by adding protected bike lanes, ADA-compliant sidewalks, and safe crossings that connect neighborhoods to parks, schools, and the Downtown Transit Center.	Planning, Public Works, MPO, Valley Metro	Miles of new bike/ped infrastructure completed	Medium-Term
TM-13	Develop a shared parking strategy for Downtown and key corridors.	Planning, Engineering	Parking plan adopted	Medium-Term
TM-14	Study Bus Rapid Transit and express bus route options.	Planning, Valley Metro, MPO	Transit study completed	Long-Term
TM-15	Identify freight corridors and reduce conflicts near neighborhoods.	Engineering, MPO	Freight routes mapped	Ongoing
Infrastructure & Utilities				
IU-1	Prepare an infrastructure asset management plan.	Engineering, Finance	Plan adopted and used in CIP	Short-Term
IU-2	Improve street lighting and public safety infrastructure.	Public Works, Police	Number of lighting upgrades	Short-Term
IU-3	Replace aging water and sewer lines in priority areas.	HWWS	Feet of pipe replaced annually	Short-Term
IU-4	Implement advanced metering infrastructure for water conservation.	HWWS	Meters installed and tracked	Short-Term
IU-5	Expand broadband access in underserved neighborhoods.	MIS, Utilities, HWWS, Providers	Percentage of area with access	Medium-Term
IU-6	Coordinate infrastructure upgrades with street reconstruction plans.	Engineering, Public Works	Joint projects completed	Medium-Term
IU-7	Integrate sustainability and energy efficiency into City facilities.	Special Projects, Public Works, Public Buildings	Number of retrofits completed	Medium-Term
IU-8	Upgrade drainage systems in flood-prone neighborhoods.	Engineering, Public Works	Projects completed in targeted zones	Medium-Term
IU-9	Harden infrastructure against extreme weather events.	Engineering, Emergency Mgmt	Number of facilities upgraded	Long-Term
IU-9	Develop redundancy plans for water and energy utilities.	HWWS, Harlingen Fire Department	Resilience strategies adopted	Long-Term
IU-10	Modernize city infrastructure with smart LED streetlighting, adaptive traffic signals, and green stormwater features to enhance safety, efficiency, and sustainability.	PPublic Works, Engineering, AEP Texas	% of lights converted; number of smart corridors	Medium-Term

#	Action Description	Responsible Entity	Metrics & Targets	Timing
Public Safety & Vitality				
PS-1	Enhance public lighting, crosswalk, and alleyway design citywide to improve safety (CPTED strategies).	Police, Public Works, Planning	Number of lighting/ crosswalk upgrades completed	Short-Term
PS-2	Assign dedicated public safety presence in Downtown Harlingen and other growth districts to support vitality.	Police Department	Officers assigned to designated zones	Medium-Term
PS-3	Expand use of public cameras and real-time monitoring in high-activity areas.	Police, IT	Number of cameras installed and monitored	Medium-Term
PS-4	Support public events and cultural activities as tools to increase safety, community pride and overnight stays.	CVB, EDC, Downtown Partners	Number of annual events; hotel occupancy rates	Ongoing
PS-5	Install vandal-resistant, accessible public restrooms in key districts.	Public Works, Downtown Partners	Restrooms installed and maintained	Long-Term
PS-6	Develop and monitor a “Smart & Green Harlingen” framework aligning transportation, parks, energy, and sustainability priorities across city departments.	Planning, City Manager’s Office	Framework adopted and updated annually	Long-Term
Drainage & Flood Management				
DFM-1	Pilot green infrastructure in flood-prone areas.	Planning, Engineering, Parks	Number of pilots completed	Short-Term
DFM-2	Revise zoning to support drainage-sensitive design.	Planning Department	Zoning code amendments adopted	Short-Term
DFM-3	Create drainage asset inventory and maintenance program.	Engineering, HWW, Public Works	Annual targets met	Short-Term
DFM-4	Update drainage master plan every 10 years.	Planning, Engineering, HWW	Plan adopted and used in reviews	Medium-Term



Funding Mechanisms



Successful implementation of the Comprehensive Plan will require strategic use of multiple funding sources, including local revenues, state and federal grants, public–private partnerships and special district financing. By diversifying funding streams, the City can advance priority projects while maintaining financial flexibility.

Local Funding Sources

- General Fund Allocations – Annual City budget appropriations for priority Comprehensive Plan actions such as sidewalk repairs, small area planning and downtown streetscape projects.
- Capital Improvement Program (CIP) – Multi-year budgeting tool for major infrastructure investments like drainage upgrades, roadway expansions and utility improvements.
- Certificates of Obligation / General Obligation Bonds – Debt financing for large-scale public projects such as parks, public facilities or water and sewer upgrades.
- Utility and Service Fees – Targeted rate adjustments for water, sewer or stormwater services to support infrastructure maintenance and expansion.
- Impact Fees – Fees on new development to help cover the cost of growth-related infrastructure like roads, water, sewer and drainage facilities.
- Increase Street Maintenance Fee – Dedicated funding mechanism collected from utility customers to provide ongoing resources for roadway repair and rehabilitation.



State and Federal Funding Programs

- Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) – Funding for roadway improvements, safety projects and multimodal transportation initiatives.
- Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) Grants – Outdoor Recreation Grants, Small Community Grants and Urban Outdoor Recreation Grants for park acquisition and development.
- Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) – Funding for water and wastewater system improvements, flood mitigation projects and conservation programs.
- Texas General Land Office (GLO) – Community Development Block Grant–Mitigation (CDBG-MIT) and disaster recovery funding for resilient infrastructure and flood control.
- Federal Transit Administration (FTA) – Grants for public transit system expansion, bus stop amenities and mobility improvements.
- U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) – Public Works and Economic Adjustment Assistance grants for infrastructure tied to job creation.



Public–Private Partnerships (P3)

- Collaborations with private developers for mixed-use, downtown and corridor redevelopment projects.
- Shared investment in infrastructure upgrades to serve new commercial or industrial developments.
- Joint-use agreements with institutions (such as TSTC, UTRGV or local ISDs) for shared facilities or workforce training centers.



Special District Financing Tools

- Tax Increment Reinvestment Zones (TIRZ) – Captures future increases in property tax revenue to reinvest in public improvements within the district (e.g., Downtown Harlingen).
- Public Improvement Districts (PID) – Allows property owners to self-assess for enhancements like landscaping, lighting and marketing in specific areas.
- Municipal Management Districts (MMD) – Supports public safety, infrastructure and economic development initiatives in targeted zones.



Philanthropic, Institutional, and Nonprofit Support

- Grants and contributions from local foundations, universities and nonprofits for cultural, environmental and educational projects.
- Sponsorship programs for public art, park amenities and events.



Developer Contributions and In-Kind Support

- Dedication of land for parks, trails or public facilities.
- Construction of infrastructure as part of development agreements.
- In-kind services for design, construction or maintenance of public improvements.